



NEWS RELEASE

Release Date: April 19, 2002

Release Number: 1013-02-04

Contact: Michèle Liebes, SBA, 206-553-7082

michele.liebes@sba.gov

U.S. Small Business Administration Honors Award Winners at Gala in Seattle

Seattle, WA The Seattle District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) honored its Washington State Small Business Person of the Year and seven advocate winners in an awards gala at the Bell Harbor Convention Center in Seattle on April 18.

The gala – a big night for small business – was the Seattle District Office’s first annual event designed to honor the winners of the 2002 small business person of the year and advocate competition and to celebrate entrepreneurial spirit in Western Washington. Christine Chen, co-anchor of KCPQ 13 morning news, was mistress of ceremonies, and Fran Bigelow, CEO and founder of Fran’s Chocolates, was keynote speaker at the well-attended event.

Alice Cunningham, founder and co-owner of Olympic Hot Tub Company in Seattle with her husband, Blair Osborn, is 2002 Washington State Small Business Person of the Year. Cunningham and Osborn, founded Olympic Hot Tub in 1977, making it the oldest spa and hot tub company in the region.

The SBA also presented seven advocate awards: Adrian Lugo, LUGO Construction in Fife, national entrepreneurial success winner; Patricia Schmick, P&L Enterprises in Federal Way, Region X accountant advocate; Elizabeth Rusnak of Banner Bank in Kirkland, Washington State financial services advocate; Regina L. Glenn of Pacific Communications Consultants in Bellevue, Region X minority small business advocate; Robert Meredith and Duke Pham of Matrix Resource Partners, Inc. in Bellevue, Washington State SBA young entrepreneurs; Kimberly A. Hilden, The Herald Business Journal in Everett, Washington State small business journalist; John H. Witham of Worksource Cowlitz in Kelso, Western Washington veteran small business advocate; and Ruth Ann Halford of Cascadia Revolving Fund in Seattle, Region X women in business advocate.

The Seattle District Office represents Western Washington, which is part of Region X encompassing Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

“We were also pleased to have the opportunity to thank our partners, lenders, and other organizations in the Western Washington small business community,” said Bob Meredith, SBA’s Seattle District Office district director. “We couldn’t provide the services we do without these dedicated professionals.”

The competition for small business person of the year and advocate awards begins at the district level with nominations from chambers of commerce, trade associations, and others. The next level of competition is at the state level followed by region-wide and national competition. Nominees for small business person of the year must meet criteria which include staying power, growth in employment, increase in sales/unit volume, innovation, response to adversity, and evidence of contributions to his/her community. Advocates of the year are selected because of their outstanding advocacy efforts to improve the climate for small business. Special award categories include SBA young entrepreneur and entrepreneurial success.

To obtain information on SBA's programs and services in Western Washington, call the SBA district office in Seattle at 206-553-7310 or visit www.sba.gov.

The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. In the Pacific Northwest, the SBA's five district offices have a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans totaling approximately \$2 billion.

#